

Amelia Bloomer



Directions: Read the passage below. Then, answer the questions that follow.

Contrary to popular belief, Amelia Bloomer never invented any underwear! Amelia Bloomer was a famous women's rights activist in the late 1800s. Born in New York in 1818, she spent her early adulthood as a schoolteacher, and later a newspaper writer.

At age 30, she started *The Lily*, a newspaper for women. In the 1800s, it was considered rude for women to give speeches, so Amelia thought that starting a newspaper, where women could write their thoughts instead of speak them, might help women express themselves while still remaining "polite" in the eyes of society. Amelia was the first woman to own and operate a newspaper in the United States.

In addition to writing about voting, education, and marriage rights for women, Amelia felt strongly that women should be able to wear different clothes. At the time, the clothing that women were expected to wear was rigid and uncomfortable. Dresses were often made from several layers of thick fabric, and the undergarments contained pieces of bone or ivory to shape the wearer's appearance. Not only was the clothing painful to wear, it could actually prevent women from moving up in society! How could a woman get a good job if she could barely move in the clothes she was wearing?

Amelia wanted to make it socially acceptable for women to wear pants in public. In other parts of the world, such as Asia, women didn't wear dresses, but instead wore long tops with loose-fitting pants. Even some brave women, such as actress Fanny Kemble, had started wearing the style in the United States. Amelia decided to start wearing the style herself. The trend caught on, and soon people began calling the pants "bloomers," after her.

1. Amelia Bloomer can be credited for popularizing a style of wearing long tops with loose-fitting pants.

2. In paragraph two, which sentence best supports the statement that women needed outlets for self-expression?

"In the 1800s, it was considered rude for women to give speeches, so Amelia thought that starting a newspaper, where women could

write their thoughts instead of speak them, might help women express themselves while still remaining 'polite' in the eyes of society."

Amelia Bloomer

3. Describe the problem women had with the clothing they were expected to wear.

Women's clothing was rigid and uncomfortable. The dresses had thick layers of fabric, and the bone or ivory inside of them made it difficult for women to move. It was painful for women to wear.

4. What were some of Amelia Bloomer's goals in her lifetime? Cite the paragraph in which you found the information.

- a. Amelia Bloomer's goal was to give women a place where they could express themselves. (Paragraph 2)
- b. Another goal was to help women gain voting, education, and marriage rights. (Paragraph 3)
- c. She had a goal of making it socially acceptable for women to wear pants in public, rather than having to wear uncomfortable dresses. (Paragraph 4)

5. What inferences can you make about Amelia Bloomer? Write them below and cite the paragraphs in the text that helped you make the inferences. *Student answers will vary, but may include:*

- a. I can infer that Amelia Bloomer was motivated. She was the first woman to own and operate a newspaper in the United States. (Paragraph 2)
- b. I can infer that Amelia Bloomer was bold. She felt that women should be able to wear the clothes they wanted, even though it was against the social norms. (Paragraph 4)

6. Describe what the author means when they say, "The trend caught on, and soon people began calling the pants 'bloomers,' after her."

Other women liked the style of wearing long tops and loose-fitting pants, and it became popular.

7. What kind of clothing do you dislike wearing the most? Why do you feel that way? How could you improve this type of clothing? Write your ideas below, and include an illustration of any changes you would make.

Student answers will vary: